

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Senator Mike Crapo from Idaho.

SENATOR CRAPO: Good morning. It's truly an honor for me to be invited to join you in this incredibly important conference. As I arrived yesterday and was driving in from the airport, the first thing I did was to pull out the list of the participants in this conference and to read over it to see who was here. What was impressive to me is that people from many different backgrounds and perspectives and interests are here. For collaboration to work, we have to develop the kind of trust and confidence among interest groups and individuals that will allow us to develop the consensus to move forward on the important issues of the day.

I suspect if you were like me many of you feel that you wear several hats. You don't come at conservation from just one perspective. For example, myself, I serve right now as the Chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee that has under its jurisdiction the conservation title of the Farm Bill, a critical part of what we'll need to work on as we develop collaborative conservation support and solutions.

I'm the former chairman of the Fisheries and Wildlife Subcommittee and the Environment Committee in the Senate that has involved with things like clean water, the Endangered Species Act and the like. And I'm also the Co-Chairman of the Bipartisan Working Group with Senator Blanch Lincoln from Arkansas to try to develop a bipartisan approach to improving and strengthening the Endangered Species Act.

But the reason I think I was invited here today because of the topic of my speech is because I'm also the Co-Chairman of the Congressional Sportsmen Caucus. And my assignment before you this morning is to talk with you a little bit about the original conservationists in our country and remind us a little bit of the history that has brought us to where we are.

In the concurrent sessions today, we'll focus on the specific challenges of collaboration and we all know that cooperation is hard work, but take this hope with you in today's discussions. We have the world's most effective system of conservation and the strengths on which it is built are still supporting us through today's challenges. Our strengths include effective regulations, state and federal partnerships and money for restoration.

We should all know how far back in our conservation history these pillars of our approach were

founded. With these strengths, the founders of American conservation, hunters and fishermen, have already achieved great success and we have already extended their success and can do more. When hunters and fishermen began organizing in the 1830s and 1840s the first and most obvious need was for regulations on the killing of wildlife.

The hunters were those who took wildlife for subsistence or recreation under an ethic of fair chase and restraint. They began to see their pursuit threatened by profiteers who killed wildlife in mass quantities to supply markets with meat and fur and feathers. Several hunting clubs had formed by the 1830s and by 1846, a group of hunters in New York had written what they called the Model Game Law which they circulated among the states to promote state hunting regulations and to employ game wardens to enforce them. It was from these state and local beginnings on which Federal regulations and protected lands grew.

The famous turn-of-the-century years of the late 1800s and early 1900s brought the establishment of the first federal conservation agencies and protected lands such as Yellowstone Park which is just about 90 miles north of my hometown. As the federal role developed, so did our second fundamental strength which is the strong state-federal partnership.

Many know of the Lacey Act of 1900 which backs up state wildlife laws by adding federal penalties for poachers who transport wildlife across state lines. But the most dramatic example of state-federal partnership concerns the Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada and the Federal Aid and Wildlife Restoration Programs that followed it. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 was the highest achievement of regulatory protection for wildlife of its time. And here is its important lesson. After its passage, conservationists began devising the next step, a program of active restoration that builds on regulatory protections and gives them full effect. That idea became the Federal Aid and Wildlife Restoration Programs also known and probably known to most of you as the Pittman-Robertson and Dingle-Johnson Act after their Congressional sponsors.

The Federal aid programs collect excise taxes that hunters and fishermen have agreed to impose on the purchase of their own equipment and supplies, hunting arms and ammunition, fishing tackle and boat fuel. These funds are distributed to state wildlife agencies for restoration and research of habitats and populations.

The accomplishments of this program reach beyond any short summary. Black bears, wood ducks, prong horn, elk, big horn sheep and mountain lions are among the species restored to abundance. The intensive work of captive reading and introduction to restore populations succeeded in part because it built on the careful controls on hunting, the available of habitat in public reserves and the hard one lessons from field research and new wildlife programs in universities.

Our elk herd today for example inhabits the entire west and is beginning its return in eastern states such as Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Tennessee. Nearly all these populations were created from remnant elk herds in the Yellowstone area.

Here's what our history tells us about our work today. We have now extended federal protections to air, water and endangered species and we will fully realize the benefits when we follow through with partnerships and emphasis on producing results. Among the challenges I know we will discuss today are how to open the law to real partnerships with state and tribal governments and landowners and collaborative groups, raise money and focus it on restoring wetlands and other habitats and endangered species.

Remember. In facing these challenges, we are backed by a strong record of success and strength. We have done it before and we can do it again. President Bush spoke of this a year ago on National Hunting and Fishing Day September 25, 2004 when he said, "America's hunters and anglers are among our nation's foremost conservationists because they've worked in the past to protect habitat and restore fish and wildlife" and because they still do so today which is why sportsmen are a big part of this audience and a reason for this conference. They volunteer their time, their talents and their energy to countless conservation projects and so do all who have gathered here from many other different perspectives.

It is because we join our energies in this successful model that we will overcome today's challenges. I want to thank you for your commitment and participation and look forward to working with you here throughout this conference. Thank you.